

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Tarover

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

2.1 miles W of South Boston city limits; 650' N of State Route 659;  
.9 mile N of Dan River; .6 mile NE of crossing of State Route 659  
over Miry Creek.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

South Boston

☒ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fifth (W. C. Daniel)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Halifax

CODE

083

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. &amp; Mrs. Henry C. Zenke

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Post Office Box 838

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 27402

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Halifax County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Halifax

STATE

Virginia 24558

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)**

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE

1958

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
D. C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on a promontory on River Road in the rolling hills of Halifax County, Tarover is a Gothic-Revival villa constructed in 1856. Built for Thomas Bruce, it is a two-story, gable-roof structure set on a low stone foundation. The central-hall-plan house is built of irregularly coursed, quarried stone with wooden detailing.

The main (south) elevation of three bays is dominated by a two-story projecting porch tower with a gable roof. The first story of the tower is an open porch consisting of three large Tudor-arch openings. The second story contains a diamond-paned oriel window. The tower shelters the main entrance of the house, a diamond-paned, transom-light double doorway with complementing sidelights. Flanking the tower, the first-story windows have triple-hung, eight-paned sash framed by simple wooden architraves. The windows are capped by rough-hewn stone lintels. The second-story windows consist of 8/8 hung-sash windows also framed by simple wooden architraves. It should be noted that the gables were originally graced by fancy icicle-like bargeboards, removed circa 1951.

The east and west elevations contain one-story wings, original to the date of the building of the main house. Each wing has its own entrance and a triple-hung-sash window on the south elevation. On both the east and west elevations of the main house, a double-hung sash window is found above the wing.

The rear (north) elevation contains a central, two-story wing of one bay. The fenestration consists of 8/8 hung-sash windows framed by simple wooden architraves on the east and west elevations. The north wall of the wing is unpierced. On the first story to the west of the wing is a diamond-paned bay window similar in execution to that found on the south facade. An 8/8 hung-sash window is found on the second story. A simple rear entrance is found to the east of the wing, along with asymmetrical fenestration. This fenestration consists of a 6/6 hung-sash window on the first story and an 8/8 hung-sash window on the second story.

The interior has a double-pile, central-hall plan. Located in the two-story wing directly behind the hall is the dining room. The hall includes an open-well, open-string stair which ascends to the second story. A noteworthy feature of the stair is the balustrade, which is treated as an open-arched screen. Original wood trim survives in the hall. The doorways here have Greek Revival-inspired "ear" architrave trim on both the first- and second-floor openings. The southwest parlor and library preserve their original black marble mantels, while the library retains its original bookcase with Gothic-inspired merlons. The second-floor rooms feature simple trim and unfortunately have lost much of their original detailing.

One stone and brick outbuilding survives from the former estate.

The register boundaries are drawn to include a fraction of the original Thomas Bruce estate, approximately 25 acres (mostly pasture), the main house, the outbuilding, and family cemetery.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMAN RELATIONS		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES                      1855-6                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT                      attributed to John Johnson

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Tarover, in Halifax County, is an outstanding example of the Victorian Gothic villa as built in stone. Erected in 1855-6 for Thomas Bruce, the dwelling was once a plantation home of an old and prominent Halifax County family.

Thomas Bruce, the builder of Tarover, was born in 1830 and was the eldest son of James and Elizabeth Bruce. The Bruce family had first moved to Halifax County in the 1780s, where they operated a series of dry goods stores. Business prospered, and by the 19th century the family was able to acquire large tracts of land in Halifax and Charlotte counties. The family came to build large plantations that included such notable residences as Berry Hill (1835-40), Staunton Hill (1848), and Tarover (1855-6).

Thomas Bruce received by deed of gift from his father, James Coles Bruce, a tract of 1100 acres in 1851. The land has been in the Bruce family since 1796, the date of its purchase by James and Charles Bruce.

Thomas Bruce directed his plantation from a frame house on River Road which burned in 1855. At this time, he formulated plans to build a new residence.

Bruce was twenty-five when he built Tarover and was undoubtedly influenced by the home of his uncle Charles, Staunton Hill, a Gothic villa constructed several years before in Charlotte County. Bruce also may have been influenced by A. J. Downing, who in his Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture (1849) recommended the Gothic Revival, especially the "Tudor Style", which he wrote, "affords the best examples of the excellence of Gothic architecture for domestic purposes..." Downing noted further, "We believe the Tudor Gothic to be the most convenient and comfortable, and decidedly the most picturesque and striking style for country residences of a superior class..." In building his new house, it is believed that Bruce enlisted the aid of architect-builder John E. Johnson.

A graduate of West Point, Johnson was an associate of Alexander Jackson Davis. Supposedly Johnson was Davis's supervisor for the building of the antebellum main building at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington. Local tradition attributes to Johnson the building of Berry Hill and Staunton Hill, two other Bruce family residences.

Unlike the older Bruce residences, Tarover is built of stone. Again, Bruce may have been influenced by Downing, who noted in The Architecture of Country Houses:

Nothing, in an architectural point of view, is so satisfactory as stone. It is so permanent, enduring, and genuine in appearance, and all ornaments are so vastly increased in apparent value when executed in this material, that, were it not for its much greater cost, it should at all times have the preference over other materials for country houses.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Cook, Kenneth H. Notes on Tarover. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives, 1970.  
Downing, A. J. The Architecture of Country Houses. 1850  
Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture. 1849.  
Halifax County Deed Books 38, 47, 54.  
Land Tax Books 1841-1863.  
Will Books 27, 28.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 25 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	6,8,1	9,0,0	4,0	6,3	6,0,0	B	1,7	6,8,1	9,9,0	4,0	6,3	2,7,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,7	6,8,1	6,7,0	4,0	6,3	1,7,0	D	1,7	6,8,1	6,6,0	4,0	6,3	5,7,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Tarover acreage being nominated is bounded by a line beginning at a point located on N side of State Route 659 approximately 2500' NE of intersection of Miry Creek and said route; thence extending approximately 1200' N, cutting through wooded area and running to end of tree line; thence extending approximately 900' E, into wooded area; thence extending approximately 950' SSE to intersection of private drive with State Route 659; thence following SW along N side of said route for approximately 1200' to point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

May 1978

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804)786-3143

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☒

LOCAL ☐

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

JUL 18 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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TAROVER, Halifax County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6 & 8,9 PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1969, 1971, 1978 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Indeed, Bruce may have derived some inspiration from Design XXVI published in Downing's Country Houses. The fact that the owner took great pride in his home is confirmed by the family belief that trained masons were brought from Richmond to supervise the cutting and placing of the rock which was quarried locally.

The house was sold out of the Bruce family in 1891, and subsequently fell into a state of disrepair. In 1951 Tarover was purchased by the Caldwell family, who restored the house. It is presently owned by Mr. & Mrs. Henry C. Zenke of Greensboro, North Carolina.

RCC

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Knorr, Catherine Lindsay. Marriage Bonds and Ministers' Returns of Halifax County, Virginia 1753-1800. Published by Compiler, 1957.

U.S.G.S. 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
South Boston, Va. 1969

TAROVER, Halifax County, Virginia

UTM References:

A-17/681900/4063600 B-17/681990/4063270  
C-17/681670/4063170 D-17/681660/4063570

42'30"

5157 II NE  
(OAK LEVEL)

